

News Release

DeSoto & Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Raptor Recovery Nebraska Releases Juvenile Bald Eagle
at DeSoto NWR on Saturday, December 29th**

Missouri Valley, Iowa - Raptor Recovery Nebraska's (RRN) Omaha Chapter will release a rehabilitated juvenile bald eagle back into the wild at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, December 29th. The public is invited to witness the release which will take place near the visitor center between noon and 1:00 PM. Visitors should meet at the visitor center at noon; Denise Lewis, RRN's Outreach Coordinator, and volunteer Randy Mays will present a short program on the bald eagle and raptor rehabilitation efforts before releasing the eagle.

The refuge encourages visitors to use the heated interior galleries at the visitor center to view wildlife during the winter months. Open water maintained outside the galleries often attracts ducks, geese and eagles; however, being at the right place at the right time is the key to observing wildlife, and there is never a guarantee you'll see a bald eagle during a visit. RRN's release on Saturday is one exception. RRN's trained volunteer facilitators conduct programs state-wide throughout the year to increase public awareness about raptors, their role in our ecosystem, and habitat conservation. Observing an actual release of a recovered bird back into the wild is a special opportunity. The eagle to be released is a juvenile female (about 2-3 years old) found with a broken wing last fall in the Grand Island, Nebraska area.

Adult bald eagles have the dark brown body and distinctive white head and tail. In contrast, juvenile bald eagles have mottled brown and white plumage. They gradually acquire the adult plumage as they mature, which takes about five years. Most bald eagles can breed at 4 or 5 years of age, but many do not start breeding until much older. Bald eagles may live 15 to 25 years in the wild.

Bald eagles are opportunistic feeders with fish comprising much of their diet. They also eat waterfowl, shorebirds, colonial waterbirds, small mammals, turtles, and carrion (often along roads or at landfills). Because they are visual hunters, eagles typically locate their prey from a conspicuous perch, or soaring flight, then swoop down and strike.

Raptor Recovery Nebraska is a 501(c)(3) education non-profit that rehabilitates orphaned or injured raptors. Each year, RRN receives hundreds of injured, sick, poisoned, or orphaned birds of prey. They work with private citizens, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, law enforcement and animal control agencies, and utility companies throughout the state of Nebraska.

On August 9, 2007, the bald eagle was removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species. After nearly disappearing from most of the United States decades ago, the bald eagle is now flourishing across the nation and no longer needs the protection of the Endangered Species Act. To ensure that eagles continue to thrive, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with state wildlife agencies to monitor eagles. Although they are delisted, bald eagles are still protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Lacey Act.

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An entrance permit is required at the refuge for all vehicles on days other than fee free days. The regular daily entrance fee for private vehicles is \$3.00. Permits may be obtained at the pay stations near the entrances or at the Visitor Center. The charge for commercial vans and buses is \$20, or \$30 if 21 or more people are aboard. Annual permits, including the \$15 DeSoto Refuge Pass, can be obtained at the visitor center.

DeSoto & Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges are located north of Omaha, Nebraska along on U.S. Highway 30 between Missouri Valley, Iowa and along U.S. Highway 75 near Ft. Calhoun, Nebraska. For more information contact 712/388-4800 or email the refuge at desoto@fws.gov. Check our websites, www.fws.gov/midwest/desoto/ or www.fws.gov/midwest/boyerchute/, for refuge updates. Like us on Facebook - search for DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges.

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